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Group D

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How does the controversy of Teaching about the Oil Sands in K-12 Schools Illuminate the ways in which Knowledge is Socially Constructed?

The controversy surrounding the teaching of oil sands in K-12 classrooms serves as a reminder of how information is disputed as well as culturally formed. Several parents and politicians reacted negatively to a Grade 4 classroom exercise in Alberta in 2019 that pushed children to consider many viewpoints on the subject of the oil sands. This instance shows how economic, political, and cultural values influence what is considered “Suitable” understanding in institutions in addition to educational objectives.

The authorities in Alberta took one side in the issue. Premier Jason Kenney denounced the task, claiming it was prejudiced against the oil sands and detrimental to Alberta’s identity and commerce (Fawcett, 2019). In the same way, the minister of education emphasized how important it is that educational institutions promote the sector by highlighting employment and a sense of regional pride. This depicts how authorities aim to create information that is advantages to particular people, in this case the oil and gas sector and its legislative backers.

On the other hand, a lot of teachers supported the lesson. Instructors and officials contended that pupils have to be taught about the oil sands from a variety of perspectives, especially the advantages for the economy and the effects on the natural environment (The Globe and Mail, 2019). According to them, teaching pupils about contentious problems—even those that are socially delicate—is essential to fostering innovative thinking. While certain parents backed this strategy, other parents retaliated by threatening educators and pressuring schools to postpone activities (CBC, 2019). These

different opinions demonstrate how community members and families influence what information is valued.

Overall, this situation demonstrates that information imparted in educational institutions is not an impartial “truth” but rather the consequence of continual fights among competing social players. The oil sands dispute demonstrates how curricular choices mirror broader societal power dynamics: whilst teachers frequently seek to expand investigation, administrations may attempt to replicate prevailing storylines. The realization that information is created and disseminated within environments of beliefs, advantage, and resistance is consistent with the theory of critical thinking.

References

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